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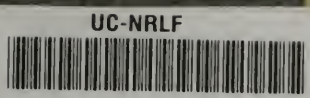

VERSES

BY

JOHN EDWARD LOGAN

("BARRY DANE")

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JOHN EDWARD LOGAN

VERSES

BY

JOHN EDWARD LOGAN
(*"BARRY DANE"*)

The Pen and Pencil Club
MONTREAL
1916

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THE PEN AND PENCIL CLUB

(M.)

LOAN STACK

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John Edward Logan, better known to many lovers of Canadian poetry as "Barry Dane," died in the year 1915. He left, in manuscript, a small but carefully chosen collection of his verses—all that he considered worthy of preservation. The present volume contains practically the whole of that manuscript collection, with the exception of a few poems of whose permanent value the author was himself doubtful. Many others which the author also marked as doubtful have seemed to the editors of this volume to be worthy of publication.

In the earlier period of his literary activity "Barry Dane" contributed freely to the current periodicals of the time; and a number of the poems in this book are already familiar to that portion of the public which is interested in thoughtful, delicate and expressive verse by Canadian writers. Several of them have indeed found an honourable resting-place in the best anthologies of English verse. In his later years he seldom sought a public wider than that provided by the circle of his intimate friends.

The Pen and Pencil Club of Montreal, of which John Edward Logan was a beloved member from its foundation, has felt that no better memorial can be set up for the dead, and no better service afforded to Canadian literature, than by the publication of this volume. Much of what it contains was written for, and read to, the members of the Club, and has until now been placed before no larger audience. The printed page can give but a poor reflection of the magnetism and sympathy of the living presence;

865

but there is in some of these verses an image of the mind and heart of the writer, so clear and vivid that those who knew him well must find their loving memory of him illumined afresh by their perusal, and those who knew him not may perchance form some picture of the man, some shadowy conception at least of the qualities which made him beloved.

The editors desire to express their gratitude for the invaluable assistance given by Mrs. Annie Robertson Logan, wife of the poet, in the revision of manuscripts, the selection and arrangement of the poems, and the correction of proofs; also their deep sense of loss through the untimely death of their colleague, Kenneth R. Macpherson, K.C., who, during the brief months by which he survived his friend, was a tireless worker himself and an inspiration to others in the task of preparing this volume for the press.

INDEX

Indian Woman's Lament - - - - - - - 1
The Flower's Ghost - - - - - - - - 2
Song: "Ah, why at times so scornful" - - - 4
When Summer Comes - - - - - - - - 5
Summer - - - - - - - - - - - 7
A Dead Singer - - - - - - - - - 9
My Garden - - - - - - - - - - 11
Song of the Rain Drops - - - - - - 14
September - - - - - - - - - - 16
Chicory - - - - - - - - - - 17
At the Dawning of the Day - - - - - 20
Vive la Bagatelle - - - - - - - - 21
Compensation - - - - - - - - - 22
Peace - - - - - - - - - - - 24
Force - - - - - - - - - - - 25
Song: "Could you forget to love me" - - - 27
Autumn's Burial - - - - - - - - 28
My Townies - - - - - - - - - 30
Fairies' Song - - - - - - - - - 31
I wonder - - - - - - - - - - 32
A debut - - - - - - - - - - 33
Idleness (I) - - - - - - - - - 35
Idleness (II) - - - - - - - - - 36
At Pompeii - - - - - - - - - 37
Ephemera - - - - - - - - - - 41
Ulysses - - - - - - - - - - 42
Penelope - - - - - - - - - - 44
Orpheus - - - - - - - - - - 45
Launcelot - - - - - - - - - 46
Guinevere - - - - - - - - - 51
Tristram to Isolt - - - - - - - - 56
Isolt to Tristram - - - - - - - - 57
Song: "What care I for critics' scorn" - - - 58
Down the Gulf - - - - - - - - 59

Two Spinners - - - - - - - - - 62
The Equinox - - - - - - - - - - 63
Phyllis - - - - - - - - - - - 65
In Arcady - - - - - - - - - - 66
Lines Written in a Miniature "Church Service" - 67
To Louis Frechette - - - - - - - 68
A Dream Verse: To Albani - - - - - 69
Individuality - - - - - - - - - 70
On the Threshold, 1900 - - - - - - 71
The Nor'-West Courier - - - - - - 73
The Time o'Day - - - - - - - - 75
The Bells of Dorval - - - - - - - 76
The Bloodroot - - - - - - - - 77
Atonement - - - - - - - - - 78
The Lake - - - - - - - - - 79
Song: "Only a Dream" - - - - - - 80
To My Children - - - - - - - - 81
The Claymore—A.D. 1788 - - - - - - 82
Sir William Van Horne - - - - - - 84
The Hawthorn Tree - - - - - - - 85

Sonnets—

Columbus - - - - - - - - - 89
Champlain - - - - - - - - - 90
Impatience - - - - - - - - - 91
She Knoweth Naught - - - - - - 92
Metis, 1885 - - - - - - - - 93
November - - - - - - - - - 94
Toil - - - - - - - - - - 95

Dialect Verses—

Shakespeer at Dead-Hoss Crick - - - - 99
The Critic of the Pilot Mound - - - - 107
"The Injun" - - - - - - - - - 112

A Cry from the Saskatchewan 118

DEDICATION

TO MY MOTHER

Songs I have heard on the plain,
When the sky above me was blue:
Songs I have heard in the waves,
As they laughed to my bark canoe:
Songs I have heard in the night,
When the voices of day were still:
Songs I have heard in the storm,
As it echoed from hill to hill.

Songs I have heard in the lives
That have blended their tones with mine,
As with the rush of the river
Is mingled the sigh of the pine:
Songs I have heard in my heart,
And none of them strange or new:
Yet I know you are glad to listen,
So I sing them over to you.

INDIAN WOMAN'S LAMENT

A BLOOD-RED ring hung round the moon,
Hung round the moon. Ah me! Ah me!
I heard the piping of the loon,
A wounded loon. Ah me!
And yet the eagle feathers rare,
I, trembling, wove in my brave's hair.

He left me in the early morn,
The early morn. Ah me! Ah me!
The feathers swayed like stately corn,
So like the corn. Ah me!
A fierce wind swept across the plain;
The stately corn was snapt in twain.

They crushed in blood the hated race,
The hated race. Ah me! Ah me!
I only clasped a cold, blind face,
His cold, dead face. Ah me!
The blood-red ring hangs in my sight,
I hear the loon cry every night.

THE FLOWER'S GHOST

APOLLO, in a gentle mood,
Looked down upon the earth,
Just as the spring first touched the wood,
And called the leaves to birth.

'Twas there he saw a tiny flower
That watched his daily race,
And, half defiant of his power,
Stared boldly in his face.

Brighter each morning grew the eye
That gazed on him alone.
At last, he found its golden dye
Was stolen from his own.

Then deep displeasure filled his heart,
That, from an earthly clod,
A fragile flower had dared to start
And emulate a God.

Fiercer and hotter grew his ire
With each succeeding day,
Until, beneath his scorching fire,
The flower all withered lay.

But pity touched a tenderer breast
That felt the flow'ret's pain;
'Twas her's, that loves all nature best,
The Goddess of the grain.

She plucked the withered plant, and blew
Within its hollow reed;
Lo, where the brilliant blossom grew,
Appeared its phantom seed.

Though lost the splendour of the spring,
The glory of the gold,
The wraith upon its silver wing,
Was fairer to behold;

And on each balmy Zephyr's breath
Through all the world was borne;
Dowered with eternal life in death,
To bloom some brighter morn.

So, when some golden hour has fled,
Still live in hope and faith,
Its fairer ghost may come instead,
The Dandelion's wraith.

SONG

AH, why at times so scornful
To eyes that plead in vain?
Ah, why again so mournful,
And lonely thus remain?
The effort of concealing
Is only the revealing
Of all the tender feeling
That in thy breast has lain.

Why flee the sweet confessing
Of loss, that is but gain,
To him who seeks the blessing
And suffers to obtain?
Thy scorn his breast has riven,
And only deeper driven
The wound so swift forgiven,
Where love defeats disdain.

The thorns about the roses,
Give but a useless pain;
Some ravisher encloses
The stem, 'tis snapt in twain.
O, yield thyself, believing
That love is not deceiving;
So, where two hearts were grieving,
Only one joy shall reign.

WHEN SUMMER COMES

I.

"WHEN summer comes!"
Ah, so we longing sigh,
When winter winds are high,
"When summer comes!"
Our pulses like the rill,
That now is cold and still
Beneath the snow,
Will joyous flow
When summer comes.

II.

When summer comes!
A messenger will bring
New life to everything,
When summer comes!
And unto you and me
Now parted, there may be
A moment sweet
What time we meet
When summer comes.

III.

When summer comes!
Ah, the sweet longed-for day
May be, yet pass away,
When summer comes!
And our sad feet have missed
The long expected tryst,—
What shall we know
Of joy or woe,
When summer comes?

IV.

When summer comes!
Alas, our hearts may yearn
For winter to return,
When summer comes.
The future we forecast,
We dream its joys will last.
To-day is fraught
With but one thought,
"When summer comes!"

SUMMER

Summer has come,
And yet no songs I hear
From out the woodland drear,
No voice of waking brook
From some sequestered nook,
Salutes mine ear:

Yet is there music that is sweeter far
Than all the sounds that are.
Thy voice! Thy voice!
And with thee, Dear,
Summer is all the year,
Summer has come.

Summer has come,
Yet to the sun's bright rays,
No opening flower displays
Its smiling eye, for lo,
The winter garb of snow
Fast clinging, stays:

Yet doth one flower forever brighter bloom
Throughout the winter's gloom,
Thy face! thy face
Fills all my ways:
Summer is all my days,
Summer has come.

Summer has come,
Though snows may not depart,
Nor meadow streamlets start
From out their crystal urn,
Nor mating birds return;
I feel its dart

Pierce me and thrill me every happy hour,
With ever subtler power.
Thy soul, thy soul
Blooms round my heart.
Summer is where thou art,
Summer has come.

A DEAD SINGER

FAIR little spirit of the woodland mazes,
Thou liest sadly low,
No more the purple vetch and star-eyed daisies
Thy matin hymn shall know.

No more the harebell by the silent river
Shall bend her dainty ear,
When nigh thou fliest, and her petals quiver
With maiden joy, to hear.

No more to flit among the yellow mustard,
Imperial thistle tops,
And intertwining woodbine, thickly clustered
With tendrils of wild hops.

No more the dragon's darting course to follow
O'er golden sun-lit sheaves:
No more to catch, within the shady hollow,
The dew from spangled leaves.

No more above the scented rose to hover,
Sipping its fragrant fee:
No more to chase across the billowy clover,
The velvet-coated bee.

What fatal stroke has torn the downy cincture
Round thy once tuneful throat
And pulseless bosom, where a deathly tincture
Dyes thy soft, feathery coat?

No gentle mate and thou shall wing together,
With tender chicks, your way
To sunnier southern fields, when autumn weather
Chills the short northern day.

Dead is the soul of love and song and laughter,
That thrilled thy fragile breast;
There is no more for thee, but dead hereafter
Of unbegotten rest.

MY GARDEN

I HAD a garden in which grew
Nought but wild weeds
In careless beauty. Ah, they knew
My humble needs.

I never thrust the cruel spade,
Or rake, or hoe,
Beneath that sweet, luxuriant glade,
To make them grow.

Knee deep I wandered, as a child
Untaught, unwise.
Stars of the earth looked up and smiled
With loving eyes.

Even to pluck one were unkind,
Seemed half a wrong;
They were so joyous, as the wind
Sang each a song.

Sweet strains, so soft, a flower's ear
Alone might know
That music from another sphere,
Borne here below.

Sweet flowers! ye were but common weeds,
So my friends said,
Who furnished me with rarest seeds
To plant instead.

So I, with sharpened sickle, thrust
Your plumage through;
Laying you, ruthless, in the dust,
Because they knew.

And plough and hoe and spade and rake
With vicious toil,
Tore up your clinging roots, to make
A cleaner soil.

Wherein I planted many a thing
From every clime;
And carried water all the spring
And summer time.

Alas, they grew not; they had strange
Exotic wants,
Born of some milder climate's range,
More fertile haunts.

Vain labour!—When you stood in crowds,
    You needed not
A toilsome friendship. Were not clouds
    Your waterpot?

Nature can give you what you need,
    While I can sing
A song in season, as a meed—
    Though worthless thing.

Return, O weeds! I humbly crave
    Your tender pardon,
Give me, as once before you gave,
    The sluggard's garden.

SONG OF THE RAIN DROPS

WE know not from whence we flow,
Bearing life or death
On a blast or breath,
We know not whither we go.

We know not pity or pain:
But fall if we must
On the earth's parched crust,
And freshen the fields of grain.

We know not passion or wrath,
As we rise up black
In a threatening wrack,
With ruin to mark our path.

We answer not mortal cry,
For the restless wind,
With a shriek behind,
Drives, and we heedlessly fly.

We are not the angels' tears
    That pitying fall
    For the wrongs that call
From earth, through the weary years.

We have never a joyous glow,
    Though we quench the thirst
    Of the fever cursed
Where the poisoned swamp winds blow.

We have neither loathing nor dread,
    As we cling like sweat
    On the pale cadet
Where he lies with a thousand dead.

And the spring may burst to bloom
    'Neath our freshening showers,
    And its million flowers
May cover the winter's tomb.

Or the flowers may droop and die
    As we strike them down
    In our streams that drown
From the stormy autumn sky.

For we know not loss or gain,
    Or from whence we flow,
    Or whither we go,—
We are only the drops of rain.

SEPTEMBER

September, O September!
Chastened by loss and pain,
Is not thy silver stubble
Fair as the golden grain?

Fairer to me than Springtime,
With wooing of birds that build,
That never may know thy glory
Of promises all fulfilled.

Sweeter than summer spangled
With flowers on every slope;—
Queen of the heart of Nature;
Goal of its early hope.

Passing in robes of purple,
Far o'er the misty meres,
Dead on thy lover's bosom,
Needing not mourner's tears.

September, O September!
Chastened by loss and pain,
Is not thy silver stubble
Fairer than golden grain'?

CHICORY

I SAW your sweet blue eyes in June
Sparkle out brightly,
And thought, alas, Old Time will soon
Shut them up tightly.

But while some frailer blossom dies
For no good reason,
Still do I see your starry eyes,
In autumn season.

Early to come and late to go,
Vagrant of flowers;
Reminding me of friends I know
And of their hours.

Like unto like, each vagrant thing,
Birds of a feather,
Are forced, in self-defence, to cling
Closely together.

So you in my small garden-plot,
    Are not offending;
Welcome, with me cast in your lot,
    You don't need tending.

Grow, multiply, increase, encore,
    With weedlike vigour;
No sickle at my humble door,
    Treats you with rigour.

Welcome to all the shine and rain
    The skies may grant you:
I have no labour, thankless, vain,
    I didn't plant you.

Corn-flower, Chicory, or what
    They choose to name you;
Grow over all the land I've got,
    And I'll not blame you.

No useful wheat shall here intrude
    Its golden treasure,
To shame you with its pompous, rude,
    Full-bushel measure.

You are not useful; but your eye
    Sheds a soft lustre
So pleasant to the passer-by,
    Where'er you cluster.

I've heard the farmer tell a tale
    Of your wild doing;
How over every hill and dale,
    He's caught you wooing:

Love-making to the tender wheat,
    And fonder parley
With oats, that were not wild, and sweet
    Kisses for barley.

This may be true, but here begin
    Renunciation;
Repent of all your former sin;
    There's no temptation;

Because no other weed can grow
    In this hard gravel;
Stay with me till the winter snow
    Bids me to travel.

AT THE DAWNING OF THE DAY

FLY, fly, O little bird, and tell me truly,
Where wandereth my love, this dawn of day;
Wing thine airy flight, and may no blast unruly,
Swerve thy pinions from the ever pleasant way:
And the butterfly, O chase not,
And the shining dragon, race not,
Lest you miss my love this dawning of the day.

Why fly you not, O little bird, but slyly
Twinkle merry eyes above the leafy spray?
Ah, a lover too hast thou, and sitting shyly,
Thou art waiting as he wings to thee his way:
Waiting for thy love to bring thee
A new song of love, to sing thee,
At this the happy dawning of the day.

Then tell me, little bird, is my love waiting
By the brooklet in the meadows far away,
For a lazy but true lover thus debating
With a bird that swings and sings upon a spray?
Then, farewell, I go to meet her,
Whose red lips are ever sweeter
Than rosebuds at the dawning of the day.

VIVE LA BAGATELLE

AH, who would be an anchorite
And live within a cell,
When there are pleasant palaces
That shelter quite as well?
And who would dress in cloth of hair,
When linen is as cheap,
Or drink from rusty canakins
When goblets are as deep?

Oh, they who'd banish days of love,
And silence hours of song,
Would make the world a wilderness
Where life were all too long:
But give us love and song and wine,
The jest and quick retort,
And earth will be a paradise,
Though life, alas, too short.

Still let the melody of song,
The ruby of the wine,
Twin streamlets, flow beneath the glow
Of eyes that are divine.
Today is all the time we know,
Tomorrow ne'er may be:
So here's to love and wine and song,
The sweet, immortal Three.

COMPENSATION

"Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful,
and the end of that mirth is heaviness."

WHAT though thy mirth and thy laughter
Be followed by sorrowful sighs?
Doth not the darkness come after
The rosiest skies?

What though some sad heart be dying?
Joyous ones spring to their birth.
So shall thy sorrow and sighing
Be followed by mirth.

All things are justly appointed,
To those who in spirit are just.
What seems to mortals disjointed,
But trieth their trust.

Nature, though gentle in dealing
With those who obey her in love;
Scourges the bold hand for stealing
Her flame from above.

Scourges, yet smiles on the sinner
Who leaps the cloud ramparts of heaven:
Yet he knows that the spirit within her
Has whispered, "Forgiven."

Pardoned, yet burdened with power,
He, like the life-boat, must launch
Into the waves that devour
Timbers less staunch.

As a man's power, so his duty—
These were appointed for this—
See that the soul keep the beauty
Of nature's first kiss.

So must the tribute we render
To nature, be such as she gave,
Or Caesar himself were more tender
To treacherous slave.

All things are justly appointed
To those who in spirit are just.
Each makes himself the anointed
Of God, or base dust.

PEACE

PEACE! peace! Is there no peace
Within the crescent of our waking hours?
No restful moment when our joys increase
Like growths of odorous flowers?

No time when all our duty
Is but to calmly wait in perfect rest,
Like hanging fruit that ripens into beauty,
By labor undistressed?

Or must we hail thee, Sleep,
As the sole moment of a blissful calm,
A rich unconsciousness wherein we steep
Bruised senses as in balm?

Then come, but bring no dream
Of waking life to fret me as I lie
On thy dear bosom: rather let my stream
Of life run softly dry.

FORCE

I come from the infinite dome
Over-arching on high,
Where the sun and the stars have their home,
That ye mortals call sky.

I am that which doth open each seed,
Where all hidden it clings,
Riving rocks with a tremulous weed,
As its petal upsprings.

Like a wave over meadows of bloom,
I pass as a breath:
But my voice in the cañon's deep gloom,
Is the tocsin of death.

I am that, which moves lip unto lip,
In a lover's embrace:
But I snatch the keen sword from the hip,
Where race hateth race.

No touch is so tender, but I
    Have inspired the hand,
No blow is so fell, where men die,
    But I wielded the brand.

The home wind that fills the white sails
    Is the breath of my mouth:
Yet I crouch where the parched Arab wails,
    For I am the drouth.

I have lifted each mountainous height,
    With its tent peaks of snow,
I have cleft it apart in my might,
    That the rivers should flow.

The wild stars that pass through the night
    With a flash, and are gone,
Forever I urge in their flight,
    As they ever flee on.

My will stretches out to the poles
    Of the uttermost sun,
Yet moves at thy side and controls
    Thy deeds, one by one.

For I am the limitless space,
    Stars my pathways have trod:
Could I fail, so would life, time and place,
    I am force, I am God.

SONG

COULD you forget to love me,
And I forget to woo;
There'd be no heaven above me,
There'd be no joy for you,
Could you forget to love me,
And I forget to woo.

But that day cometh never,
For love that loveth true
Is as the light forever,
That each day must renew;
So that day cometh never
To love that loveth true.

AUTUMN'S BURIAL

HARK! light footsteps patter;
No one near I see:
'Tis the winds that scatter
Dead leaves from the tree.

Yet I make confession,
That I feel a dread
Of the dead procession
Burying its dead.

Through the naked branches
Peers the pallid Queen
Weaving ghastly fancies
With her fickle sheen.

Mockery of mortals,
Skeleton on high,
Sentinel of portals
Where souls never die.

White as alabaster,
    Thou art like a tomb
Reared above disaster,
    Brightest in the gloom.

Still the leaves keep shifting,
    Through the silent night,
Mournful faces lifting
    In the wavering light.

And they mourn with reason,
    As they restless wave,
For they bear a season,
    Dying, to the grave.

Dead—the last endearment,
    Sadly they bestow:
Winding like a cerement,
    With the drifting snow.

MY TOWNIES

I HAVE no garden, but a humble street,
Meeting another, forms a fair retreat,
Where at a corner, standing in a glade,
Trees arch together for a cooling shade.
All the young spring-time, through each summer morn,
I hear a music on the breezes borne,
The call of birds awaking, bids me rise
To catch the glory of the early skies.
No cry of labour in their joyous rune,
Their toils are playtime and their speech a tune;
Instinct with life that knoweth naught of ill,
Unfettered as a leaping mountain rill,—
Then shrieks the tumult of man's loftier life,
The vain endeavour and the sordid strife.

O, come, calm moments! on my ear to pour
Thy floods melodious, at my urban door.
Usher, ye birds, my days, with thy glad hymn,
To leave my soul some echo, far and dim,
Through the dull hours of labour underpaid,
Wherein thy tones shall not completely fade;
Trusting another morn of song shall break,
Alluring me to rapture, as I wake.
Ye birds, thy voices softly shrill and wise,
Translate my corner to a Paradise.

FAIRIES' SONG

WE have beauty that lasts forever
In a land of eternal youth.
We have loves that no fate can sever,
We have lips that are sweet with truth.

We have eyes that no pang of sorrow
Has stained with a fruitless tear,
For today and tonight and tomorrow
Are a joy through the rolling year.

I WONDER

IF you were a Princess in Fairy-land,
And sped on a gossamer wing,
Waving a wand in your dainty hand,
And if I were a Fairy King?
If I drew nigh with a lover's sigh,
And dropt on my bended knee,
Laying the crown of my kingdom down
At your feet, as a lover's fee?

If we were like this, and it all were so,
I wonder what you would do.
I wonder if I should be told to go,
Or allowed to remain and woo.
I wonder if I would homeward fly,
To fetch you a fairy ring,
If you were a Princess in Fairyland,
And I were a Fairy King?

But you are a fairy now, in truth,
A wonderful, wingless fay,
And live in the fairy-land of youth,
Unthinking, from day to day:
While I go down to the busy town,—
So what is the use to sing
"If you were a Princess in Fairyland,
And if I were a Fairy King?"

A DEBUT

A SEED fell in a tiny rift
Between the rocks, one autumn day,
And there beneath the deepening drift,
Benumbed, it pining lay.

No throbbing of the mountain rills,
No music of a passing bird,
The wild wind shrieking through the hills,
Was the sole voice it heard.

It ne'er had known the petals rare,
Within whose folds it sprang to birth,
The dead leaves fluttered in the air
When first it saw the earth.

Thus long it lay and murmured sore,
That it was only born to die;
One morn it heard the sudden roar
Of torrents rushing by.

As from a midnight of despair
    It seemed to wake, to live, to rise,
And bursting upward to the air,
    It saw the azure skies.

And swaying in the balmy wind,
    With artless pride and dainty grace,
It bent above a stream to find
    Its own sweet pictured face.

IDLENESS—(I)

GRANT me no idle hour when grief
Across my pathway steals,
Labour alone can bind the sheaf
Wherein the drowsy poppy leaf
Its soothing balm conceals.

But grant me days of idleness
When joy comes wandering by,
My greatest toil a fond caress,
A rose's thorn my chief distress,
My moan, a lover's sigh.

Grant me no idle moment's space
To meet with death—ah no!
Too long a gaze on that gaunt face,
And I might falter; let me place
My hand in his, and go.

IDLENESS—(II)

CURSED with desires that ne'er fulfil,
With thoughts that faint ere we express,
Ambitions greater than the will,
Life riddles we may never guess.

Fain would I strive no more for gain,
Aye, barter all the world's success,
To roam the mountain and the plain
With thee alone, in Idleness.

AT POMPEII

JOVE! 'twas a glorious sight to see,
As I lay in a balcony,
The lava rivers from the crown
Of scarred Vesuvius, twisting down
Like golden serpents to the town
Low lying by the trembling sea.

(Nor hand nor foot of me was free
To leave my couch, to rise and flee),
I saw each lift its glittering head,
As through some narrowing gorge it sped,
And hissing o'er the meadows spread
A thousand tongues toward Pompeii.

I saw scared faces that I knew,
Each like the other, pallid, through
The darkness of the cinder blast,
Heedless of me, go hurrying past,
Leaving me like a splintered mast
Stranded where waves their wreckage strew.

There was no friendship in that hour,
When each one felt the deadly shower,
And heard the murmur, then the roar
Of fierce waves from hell's farthest shore,
Dash up and break and topple o'er
The ramparts of a mountain tower.

My slaves had fled at the first sight
Of that black heaven and lurid light:
But I had been alone before
When heaven was black as midnight's core,
And earth as red as hell's broad floor
With blood, yet felt not this afright:

* * * *

Times past, when my veins' fiercer flood
Sped which way beckoning beauty stood,
Had I not held two perfect lips
Against my own, that would eclipse
The flame of lava where it dips
To kiss the haylands into blood?

But by some fancy of my brain,
We two, who had been one, were twain—
Passed and repassed, until of late
There grew within my soul a hate
To see her coldly move in state,
Who trembling on my breast had lain.

And now, once more adown the street
They came with steps by fear made fleet,
    Bearing her with the face serene,
    Curved lips no whit less red I ween
    Than if this horror ne'er had been,
And every breath were odorous sweet.

She saw me as I helpless lay
Waiting the end on that dread day:—
    Her voice was like a trumpet blast,
    They trembled, stopped and looked aghast,
    Then bore me with her, as they passed
Down to the waters of the bay.

Far out upon the wild, vexed tide,
Her galley dipped its glittering side;
    She pointed to a cockle boat
    That scarce seemed large enough to float.
    "Bear him, I wait."—Her full white throat
Turned from me; was it love or pride?

They left me with the galley's crew,
I clung across the thwarts, I knew
    There was but little time to waste,
    I swear I cried to them to haste;
    A great red flood of flame effaced
The rocking mountain from my view.

Gods! they had worshipped her—those slaves
Sped like winged demons o'er the waves,
    Back to a hell. I saw her stand,
    Lean toward me, kiss her slender hand,
    Then sink into the molten sand,
Among a thousand other graves.

EPHEMERA

LIFE at best a scented flower,
Catch the sweeetness ere it fly:
Love at most the perfume's power
Borne upon a summer sigh.

Grief at worst a passing shower,
Else the flowers of life grow dry:
Death a perfect midnight hour
Where in dreamless sleep we lie.

ULYSSES

AH, my Penelope! Our year of bliss
Sped all too swiftly to its final hour:
War, triumph, shipwreck, pain, have not had power
To efface the impress of our last, long kiss.

If I have lingered, 'tis that envious seas
Have lifted up their huge and shapeless hands,
And thrust me like drift seaweed upon sands,
Or rugged headlands, or fair kirtled leas.

If I have lingered, ere I homeward turned,
It was not that a lessened love I bore
For thee, Penelope, for more and more
The sacred flame within my bosom burned.

But a wild, roving passion grew within:
A thirst to fill my life with daring deeds:
To come again a wanderer, to the meads
Of Ithaca, and its sweet queen re-win.

To tell her of those victories of mine:
To tell her of vast struggles and defeat,
To feel her sympathy, and see the sweet
Unconscious tears of love and pity shine.

And I have come at last, Penelope,
And every thread thy trembling fingers spun
Through weary waiting years, are knit as one
Strong girdle binding me for aye to thee.

PENELOPE

WHY are her eyelids drooped in sorrow ?
Why does she sit the livelong day,
And whisper to herself, "To-morrow,"
And guide the shuttle on its way ?

Why do her lips compress and whiten,
As courtly wooers bend the knee ?
Why does no blushing colour heighten
Upon her cheek so fair to see ?

Why does her queenly figure tremble,
As rival suitors strain the cord ?
Because her heart can scarce dissemble
The love she bears her absent lord.

Why does her heart beat wilder motion
When one strong arm the prize has earned ?
Because from o'er the treacherous ocean,
The lost Ulysses has returned.

Ah, would, as in this ancient fable,
Love's story were forever thus:
Our own would not be so unstable,
If such true hearts should beat for us.

ORPHEUS

WERE there no life but this,
Then were it well:
But if there be, and that my soul should miss
The heaven where thine would dwell,
Thy spirit would disdain the lonely bliss,
And seek mine down in hell.

LAUNCELOT

I.

O THOU whose eyes like falchions flash above,
Cleaving my heart in twain,
I fear not thy swift strokes, though thou should'st prove
My everlasting pain:
When thou art cruelest, then most I love,
Though it be all in vain.

And yet, I sometimes hold thee half unworthy
Of this strong love of mine:
Though I be very basest of the earthy,
Yet is my love divine.

A higher spirit that takes my form and fashion,
And is dragged down to thee,
By the gross weight of a fierce mortal passion
Riving the soul of me.

Thine eyes, as liquid as a dew-clad flower,
Touch me with softer rays,
And of their gentleness a subtler power
Encircleth all my ways.

So that no whither would my footsteps flee,
    But that lithe arms and soft
Stretch out and in their clasp encompass me,
    Mine honour stained thus oft.

So that no whither would my soul arise,
    Rending itself from thee:
But that it feels the magic of thine eyes,
    And is no longer free.

Oh, broken honour! making hell and heaven
    Here on the pleasant earth,
Would that some spear-shaft through this breast had driven,
    Ere I had stained thy worth.

II.

We have repented of our grievous sin:
    Long years of toil and prayer,
And Christ's great mercy, yet for us may win
    Of heaven some little share.

"We have repented," so our lips may speak
    To calm the soul's unrest:
But if one sad regret for parting break
    Our peace, we are unblest.

Yea, all unblest, not fully shrived of guilt,
Weary in prayer, I sleep,
And dream that once again I grasp the hilt,
And on my charger leap.

Dream that the lists are opened, that I bear
Brave knights before my lance:
Dream that the very fairest of the fair
Has deigned on me to glance.

Dream that her smile is of my life the charm,
Guiding mine ashen spear,
Lending a triple strength unto mine arm,
So that I know not fear.

Dream that I smite upon the foeman's crest,
Great blows for her sweet sake:
Dream that her love has made me doubly blest,
And dreaming thus, awake—

Awake, as smitten by a foeman's steel,
And stretch me for my sword,
Till full aroused, within my hand I feel
The cross of Christ my Lord.

Then is it that I know myself unblest,
All unrepentent yet:
For like a barbed spear point in the breast,
Clingeth one wild regret.

Yet do I pray me every morn and night,
And through the heavy day,
That from my soul it may be severed quite,
Bearing my guilt away.

III.

What are these bonds about my weary arms ?
I feel, but see them not:
Ha, Merlin! hast thou wrought on me with charms,
Chaining me to this spot ?

Unhand me; nay, I will not thus be bound—
Bring me my spear and shield.
Has thy dull ear caught not the welcome sound
Born from the tented field ?

Hark! for they call me—lift my wizard spell,—
The Queen doth speak my name:
Yea, I will go, though thou be leagued with hell,
To work my fall and shame.

Thy knight is coming, Love, for thee alone,
But for thine eyes to see;
Through the wild din of arms, thy gentlest tone
Seeketh and findeth me.

Not for hoarse plaudits do I seek the fray:
O Love! I dare arise
And battle with an Empire, if it lay
In sight of thy sweet eyes—

Of thy dear eyes, sweet Love, whose faintest beam
Maketh my heart to leap—

* * *

Ah me, that cruel, sweet, eternal dream,
The life of me asleep.

Oh! holy brother, kneel thee by my side,
And fold my hands in prayer,
That I may supplicate the Crucified
To lift me from despair.

Am I forgiven? Oh! Lord, thou knowest best
How this wild heart has fought
Against its passion, finding little rest
In prayer and lonely thought.

So little rest and comfort come to those
Whose lives apart are set,
And bearing ever, to their mournful close,
A burden of regret.

And yet I fear not, though I trembling pray,
Raising my hands to heaven:—
We shall be lifted to the purer day,
Together and forgiven.

GUINEVERE

I.

WHY does he love me ? That I am more fair
Than other women ? 'Twas perchance his eye
That led him on. I saw the fancy there;
Would God I could have bid the fancy die.

Ah me! no wonder that I sometimes sink,
In silent horror, on my chapel floor,
My hand has mixed this cup that I must drink,
And taste its bitterness for evermore.

But I do love him! O, my Launcelot!
My love, my knight, my—nay, nay, not my king:—
Heaven, I do hate that word which comes to blot
My full expression, like some evil thing.

Why should I thus be chained to one whose love
Is ever like a cold, blue, placid bay
That winds fret never, and where clouds above,
Pass smooth and tearless on their lofty way.

I would the ocean of my love were flecked
With foam from leaping billows, and the sky
Like to a tattered banner; though they wrecked
Our tossing galley, in his arms I'd die.

I would have breakers in my lover's breast,
I would have storms upon my lover's brow;
Then were each calm a blessed time of rest,
A sweet repentance, a new spoken vow.

O! I do love thee, mine own Launcelot.
Why not proclaim it to the world and flee?
Earth's very barrenest and bleakest spot
Were a whole paradise to thee and me.

Why does he take me not? It were my will.
What matter now? the future were the same.—
Some frayed and straining strand of honour still
Binds him to keep the secret of my shame.

O God, forgive us, for that first strange touch
Of lips that made us tremble so, that there
We dropped the jewel, honour—Oh, how much,
And on which side repentance, lies despair?

Repentance! That is past, it is too late:—
O, come, my love, our only heaven is this!—
Swoon conscience with caresses, and let fate
Strike when we heed not, even as we kiss.

II.

I have shut out the world, and wear, as weeds,
The garment of my bridal to the cross,
Strange answers to my prayers my spirit needs,
To make me look upon the world as dross.

Oh, I have prayed so madly to forget,
And poured out rivers of my burning tears:
But even as I rise from prayer, regret
Pierces my spirit, for the banished years.

Heaven keep me from despair. This weight of sin
Sinks me each moment nearer to the flame.
Can this poor, fluttering, sable garment win
One day of peace for me, or hide my shame.

Oh! I could tear it from my aching form,
And leap forth unforgiven into hell,
For I might see, even once, within the storm
Of fiery waves, the face I love too well.

God, strike me or forgive me, I can bear
But little longer this great weight of woe.
Why does that calm, sad face with golden hair,
Come, like an angel's, in the sunset-glow ?

It cannot come to mock me with its calm
And sinless lips, and passionless, sad eyes,
Too sorrowful for tears: perchance some balm
It brings my tortured spirit from the skies.

Mayhap it meaneth that I am forgiven;
That vision could no other message bring.—
Surely the dear Christ looking down from heaven,
Hath as much mercy as an injured king.

Oh! I do feel some little thrill of hope.—
Not all forgiven: but I can feel as one,
Who journeying all night up a mountain slope,
Catches the first warm radiance of the sun.

Thank God, that if I can not banish thought,
I yet can pray to have it purified;
Trembling I feel the answer I have sought,
Lift my sad heart, and bear it, like a tide.

And yet my tears fall even as I pray:
But tears may help to wash my sinful feet,
And make them worthier the narrow way
They bleeding travel—may their steps be fleet.

III

Strong hope!—sweet peace!—How often have I led
Some faint and weeping fugitive from sin
Up to their very threshold, and then fled,
Not daring of myself to enter in.

I had a vision of a noble knight,
    Who rode up to a golden city's gate,
And smote upon the panel shining bright,
    With his cross-hilted sword, nor brooked to wait.

An angel was the porter, and he cried
    "Who art thou that thus comest as a king?"
"A sinner, for whom Christ was crucified,
    "His blood is all the warrant that I bring.

"Stay, ere I enter, weeping in the way
    "There lies a woman, and His blood was shed
"For her as for us all. Her sisters say,
    "'Unclean, unclean!' and pass with lifted head—

"And yet she toils and weeps, and lives to pray
    "Forgiveness: but her heart is faint with fear:
"And these good sisters' words, her steps delay—"
    The angel answered, "Bring the woman here."

And as they came up to the golden door.
    The angel spake not: but flung open wide
The portal,—I awaking saw no more,
    But that they entered walking side by side.

This was the pure, sweet vision of my sleep,
    And hope came with a flood of morning light,
And faith with the calm sunset, and will keep
    My soul in peace till there be no more night.

TRISTRAM to ISOLT

A Song

I.

IF we had known, as now we know,
The measure of our love and hate!
Could time again but come and go,
Ah! would we dare to brave our fate!
I daring all for love of thee,
Casting aside my truth and fame,
And thou, because of trust in me,
Scorning the pointing hand of blame,
How would it be, O Love! O Sweet!
Could we be young again and meet ?

II.

"If we had known as now we know ?"
Sad question born of sad regret,
Ah! why has time no ebb and flow,
Like tides that turn—or stars that set
Only to rise some fairer night,
And shed their radiance from above,
On eyes that rival their sweet light—
No answer comes, my Sweet! my Love!
There is no answer, Love, my Sweet,
For youth is past, and time is fleet.

ISOLT to TRISTRAM

SING thee a song, my Love!
I would that these lips could sing:
But the day goes by with a weary tread,
And night but maketh the eyelids red
With tears that are shed for spring.

For a spring that ne'er may come,
The spring of a fancied past,
When birds were mated and built and sang
In their joyous loves, till the forest rang
With music too sweet to last.

But this is summer time,
Alas! that it should be so:
And thy nest is built in a distant tree,
And we vaguely wonder how it can be,
Half dumb with a sense of woe.

And the autumn draweth nigh,
With touches of silver frost,
And the winter days they come and go
For the birds return to mate—ah, no!
Our spring is forever lost.

SONG

WHAT care I for critics' scorn,
If you love my singing?
From your eyelids every morn,
Heavenly light for me is born,
Golden glory flinging.

What care I though wise heads sneer,
If you chide me never?
All their censure comes not near
While your words are in my ear,
Ringing there forever.

What care I for spite or hate?
So I know you love me,
Every cruel turn of fate
Leaves, me still with heart elate,
And blue skies above me.

DOWN THE GULF

SHE was here last season, down by the sea,
In this village set like a sea-bird's home
In a cleft of crags, where the wind blows free
Its ceaseless songs to the dancing foam.

Shall I know her cottage from all the rest ?
Surely some halo about the place,
Or last, late bloom where her feet have press'd,
Remains to tell of her own sweet grace.

Surely one blossom ? Alas! not one,
For the dead grass lies in the wind's cold hand,
With a gem of frost in its hair; the sun
Hath light, not warmth, for the dreary land.

Is there no trace where her feet have strayed,
No spot she favoured above the rest,
Down on the sand where the swallows played,
Out on the rocks where the waves caressed ?

I will stand just here where the path curves down
    Sharp and steep, for she must have stood
Just at this edge of the little town,
    To gaze out over the purple flood.

Do I not know, for my heart beats "Yes,"
    She stood and thought as she gazed—Ah, well,
Ye winds of summer, ye could not guess
    Her thought, or guessing ye could not tell.

O miner, seeking the golden star
    Lying deep hid in the earth's alloy,
You have seen its gleam in the rosy spar,
    And reeled, half faint, in your trembling joy.

You have pressed your lips to the stones and wept,
    You have laughed, and pressed them, again, again,
You have come at night like a thief, and crept
    Noiseless and fearing the eyes of men.

You have done all this for a spark of gold
    Clasped in a stone, and I blame you not:
Would you blame me now if the north wind told
    That I pressed my lips to this rocky spot ?

Just here where I swear her hand has lain,
    As she turned to rest from the steep ascent:
O miner, you know not of joy or pain,
    If you bow not too, as my head is bent.

What came of your star in the rock and earth,
    Have you got it still ? No, it pinched away,
And left you nought but your tears; your mirth
    You crushed with your heart in the quartz that day.

Go forth again till you find a gleam
    In the rosy rock: you may laugh and kiss,
But leave it there, so your soul may dream
    Of a morrow's wealth that your toil might miss.

TWO SPINNERS

I AM the spider, and I have spun
My fragile web, where the morning sun
Will burnish a moment the midnight dew,
That falters and sparkles and filters through,
A corselet, fit for a faery queen,
(Like a picture-pane when the frost is keen),
Entrapping the heedless butterfly,
As it wavering flutters idly by.
Yet deep in a corner I weave my woof
Under the pauper's sinking roof,
Batten on vermin, and hear the tone
Of the sluggard's curse or the cripple's groan.
What is the use of my gossamer skein,
Spun, broken, respun, and snapped again ?
What is mine, to the silkworm's art ?
Her treasure is sold in the crowded mart.
The starry pattern I daily weave
May tear and tatter; but who shall grieve ?
So devil-may-care in the world am I,
For it profits none, though I live or die.
What does she do but spin her thread,
Then drop in her selfmade cerement, dead,
By the human hand that robbed her bed ?
She knoweth naught in her silent den,
Blind, patient spinner, neath far Cevennes.
And I know naught; yet I spin my span,
Wondering ever why each began.

THE EQUINOX:

YE sang, O winds, my song of birth,
For I was born what time of year
Ye sweep lone places of the earth;
Press on my brow, I have no fear.

For I have turned my face to catch
Thy fierce embrace, thy bitter kiss;
Have seen beneath the battened hatch,
Forms shrinking from thy fearsome bliss.

When I shall pass, as it must be,
Sing, sing as now I hear ye sing,
From a mad shriek to melody
Sweet as bird's voices in the Spring.

Winds of the mountain or the plain,
Winds that but silver-tip the grass,
Winds of the Street, do not disdain
To touch me as ye hurrying pass.

Fill to the full life's straining sail,
No matter whither I may tack,
When weathering thy last wild gale,
Knowing I never shall voyage back.

Leaving upon some unknown shore,
My cargo's wreckage, tempest tossed;
And I, half thankful 'twas no more,
And that so little had been lost.

PHYLLIS

WHEN Phyllis laughs, it is a smile
So sweet, so coy, it would beguile
Even St. Anthony a while,
When Phyllis laughs.

When Phyllis weeps, it is a tear
So mournful, pitiful, yet clear
As waters from a mountain mere,
When Phyllis weeps.

When Phyllis neither laughs nor weeps,
A light beneath her eyelids creeps,
Then, then, I know her bosom keeps
Sweet thoughts for me.

IN ARCADY

I LIVED in Arcady when I was young,
That was a long four thousand years ago,
And on the hillsides lay me down and sung
My songs to Phyllis, when the sun was low:
For we were shepherds there, where tendrils clung
About the tree-boles that the wild vines know.

And still I live in Arcady, and she
Listens to hear me pipe my simple lay,
Just as in that young time when life was free,
And all the year was a perpetual May.
I wonder if I yet shall singing be,
Another thousand years beyond today ?

I shall, if Phyllis doth but lean her ear
To catch again what melody my voice
May pour to her, and touch me without fear,
Laying her hand on mine, her only choice.
O! I shall sing again, and drawing near,
Press with my lips, and two souls shall rejoice.

LINES WRITTEN IN A MINIATURE "CHURCH SERVICE"

'TWILL need good eyes, my girl,
To read this type of pearl.

'Twill need a better head,
To know what thou hast read.

'Twill need the best of hearts,
To heed what it imparts.

Which being done, my girl,
Thou hast the priceless pearl.

TO LOUIS FRECHETTE

TO you, my elder brother, far above
The bigotry of races or of creeds,
This palm of friendship I extend in love
That sows no discord's seeds.

A DREAM VERSE

To Albani

COULD I but have unstinted choice
Of all the gems that sparkle clear,
I'd choose the jewel of thy voice,
To hang forever in mine ear.

INDIVIDUALITY

STEAL not another's art;
Lofty, create thine own;
Take from thy throbbing heart
Its colour, and impart
That to thy canvas' tone.

Do not as others do,
Some imitative thing;
With thine own passion woo
The beautiful, the true;
Fearless, spread thine own wing.

Then soar; for thou shalt rise
Far from the lower earth,
And float serene in skies
Where but the simple, wise,
Meet and give worth for worth.

ON THE THRESHOLD, 1900

THOU new-time temple that dost ope
So soon thy portals to the wave
Of progress, can we dare to hope
A vaster aisle, a loftier nave ?

Where we, the nations, all must take,
Like myriad artisans combined,
Our parts, to fill thy space, and make
Great frescoes from the human mind.

I turn to find in temples past
That song and science, faith and art,
Change with the hour, and there but last,
Changeless, the passions of the heart.

These are the same in every space,
Bold paintings by the hand of Fate,
In lurid colours that efface
All others — boundless love and hate.

And at the door of every fane,
    There stands a maiden, smiling, fair;
But in her hand the sword of pain,
    And snow-white lilies in her hair.

Immutable for time to be,
    Man's heart; till life's last sand be poured:
For at thy portal still I see
    The maiden with the naked sword.

THE NOR'-WEST COURIER

I.

UP, my dogs, merrily,
The morn sun is shining.
Our path is uncertain,
And night's sombre curtain
May drop on us, verily,
Ere time for reclining:
So, up, without whining,
You rascals, instanter,
Come into your places—
There, stretch out your traces,
And off at a canter.

II.

Up, my dogs, cheerily,
The noon sun is glowing.
Fast and still faster,
Come, follow your master,
Or tonight we may wearily,
Tired and drearily
Travel, not knowing
What moment disaster
May sweep in the storm-blast,
And over each form cast
A shroud, in its blowing.

III.

On, my dogs, steadily,
Though keen winds are shifting
The snow flakes, and drifting
Them straight in our faces.
Come, answer me readily,
Not wildly or headily
Plunging and lifting
Your feet, keep your paces;
For yet we shall weather
The blizzard together,
Though evil our case is.

IV.

Sleep, my dogs, cosily,
Coiled near the fire
That higher and higher
Sheds its light rosily
Out o'er the snow and sky,
Sleep in the ruddy glow,
Letting Keewaydin blow
Fierce in his ire:
Sleep, my dogs, soundly,
For tomorrow we roundly
Must buffet the foe.

THE TIME O'DAY

WHAT is the time o'day, my love,
What is the time o'day ?
The time o'day is four i'th' morn,
For the birds are whisp'ring in the thorn,
And roses the breast of the east adorn,
So that's the time o'day.

What is the time o'day, my love,
What is the time o'day ?
The time o'day is the hour o'noon,
For I hear the sound of the horn's shrill tune,
Oh! was there ever a sweeter rune
I' the fields this time o'day?

What is the time o'day, my love,
What is the time o'day ?
The time o'day is the stroke o'seven,
For toil is over, the moon's in Heaven,
And peace is with us, our ills to leaven,
So that's the time o'day.

What is the time o'day, my love,
What is the time o'day ?
The day is over, the night is here,
And I lie with my arm around thee, dear,
Yes, nestle your head without a fear,
Till the dawn brings back the day.

THE BELLS OF DORVAL

AS sweet as the chimes of bluebells
Must be to a Fairy's ear,
Are the tongues of the bells of Dorval
That every morn I hear;
As the birds awake me early,
From their hawthorn lodges near,
As the sun strikes on my eyelids,
With its painless, golden spear.

THE BLOODROOT

FIRST bursting bud of spring, before thy portal
I greet thee, half in awe as one thought dead,
Or being dead, hast risen up, immortal;
Thou wast so long within thy wintry bed.

In that groined crypt of gnarléd roots, didst slumber?
Or art thou given to us a new birth
Outstripping other flower-babes thereunder,
That follow thee to make a pleasant earth ?

Mysterious one, whose coming or whose exit
I know not more than doth the fool or wise,
I worry not my soul; then why perplex it
To seek beneath a simple flower's disguise?

And yet some eve I'll lay me where no care is,
Nigh to some tree bole where the soft earths cling,
And watch all night as children watch for fairies,
If I may see thy sudden bloom upspring.

It will be vain, for in one moment's winking
From arduous waiting, I awake shall start
And find before me, as with fear half shrinking,
The Bloodroot's eye searching out all my heart.

ATONEMENT

THERE is no creed or dogma that can lift
A sunken, sinful soul.
Salvation is no charitable gift,
Or miser's niggard dole.

Upon the waters of tempestuous life,
The soul must float alone,
By its own penitence and bitter strife,
Must for itself atone.

THE LAKE

*NEK-kek-gonce-se-mint-te-gon,
That my bark has floated on.
Never more the blade I'll dip
And across thy wavelets slip;
Or with widening wake shall trace
Silver fans to hide thy face.
Never more at dusk or dawn,
Nek-kek-gonce-se-mint-te-gon.

Never more thine echoes clear,
Ten sweet calls, salute mine ear;
But in memory shall last
That rare Autumn of the past,
With its Indian-summer haze
Softer than a woman's gaze.
Waters pure as Helicon,
Nek-kek-gonce-se-mint-te-gon.

*This name is the Ojibwa for "Little-otter-tail-lake, and is here spelled phonetically from the sound that I have heard.

SONG

ONLY a dream, I care not,
If it be only so;
For, in the life, I dare not
Whisper so fondly low:
With a laugh she might break my heart,
If I wooed in the light of day:
Yet in dreams she smiles as she sits apart;
But she never hath said me nay.

Only a dream, no matter,
If it be life to me;
Daylight but comes to scatter
Scenes where I long to be.
Thus ever I seek her face,
And ever it fades away,
As I slip from the light of the darkness,
Into the dark of the day.

TO MY CHILDREN

TO you, my verse, I sing this lullaby;
For are you not the children of my heart ?
Something of me, the laughter and the sigh,
A sense we know, from others far apart.

You, you are all the progeny I own;
Such wilful babes, that with your prattle soothe
My mind, when otherwise my lips might moan;
You make the crooked pathway straight and smooth.

I think I am a parent who has brought
This brood of noisy youngsters to a wild,
Where passers, careless, nod; but with no thought,
That one, perchance, may be a best-loved child.

A little cripple with uneven feet,
And gait uncertain, but to me so dear,
For that its eyes and smile and lips repeat
Something I knew of in a long past year.

Good, bad, indifferent, yet I love you all,
Because ye are mine own, my flesh and blood;
So shall I, till I hear the final call,
And pay my obolus and cross the flood.

THE CLAYMORE—A.D. 1788

WHAT is my story ?
A blaze of glory,
A gleam, a flash and a deadly stroke,
The battle's thunder,
A pale face under,
Life rent asunder
In a pall of smoke.

And O, how brightly
The forges nightly
Shone as they welded us true and strong;
For the beacon's light
On the hills at night
Were shining bright
To the gathering throng.

O, for the raid
With the shining blade,
And the deed that lives in the story told;
For the arms to wield
The sword and shield
On the bloody field,
As in days of old.

Rusted with stains
From the Southron's veins,
An idle relic, a useless brand;
For the days are fled
When true hearts bled—
And the King is dead
In a distant land.

No more together
O'er hill and heather
The clans shall gather to greet their king,
For the broad bright blade
Its part has played,
And away is laid
Where the cobwebs cling.

SIR WILLIAM VAN HORNE

WHERE shall those feet tread on the unknown way,
That here explored, untiring, our dull sod ?
What shall that mind discover and survey
Upon the illimitable fields of God ?

Must we not feel that swift from star to star,
From station unto station, that great soul,
An emigrant, shall reach from worlds afar,
Through wide-flung portals, Being's perfect goal!

THE HAWTHORN TREE

NO gloomy sepulchre for me.
Make ashes of me when I die,
Then take them to the "Hawthorn tree"
And scatter to the open sky,
The dust that would be free.

Thus, when each spring returns so fair,
Richer may glow the slopes of grass,
Just for the very love they bear
For one who never more may pass,
Whose spirit lingers there.

SONNETS

COLUMBUS

AS some strong soul that launches from life's shore,
Fearless, yet awed, upon the silent, wide
Ocean of all eternity, whose tide
Laps a new kingdom when the voyage is o'er.

So thou, Columbus, fearing not the roar
Of unknown billows, stood prophetic eyed
On thy frail deck, until at last they cried
"Land! land!" and a new world lay stretched before.

Thou set'st upon earth's brow a golden crown,
The bright tiara of the Occident,
The splendid goal of freedom was thy gift.

Would that some spirit hearing thy renown,
Might hitherward return the path it went,
And with such tidings wearied hearts uplift.

CHAMPLAIN

FROM the far Breton shore, there sped one day,
White-wingéd, prayerful, steadfast, a strong soul
That heeded not of night, or storm, or dole;
But with great purpose cleft tempestuous spray.

Nature was impotent that flight to stay;
The powers of Neptune lost their mad control;
So thus the seabird fluttered to its goal,
The rock-walled waters of a magic bay.

There Champlain stood as one whose arm could win
The glory of the ages; with God's gift
The eye to pierce the dull immediate haze.
He caught the vista of the golden ways
Posterity must march; there did he lift
Alone, the latch of Empire and strode in.

IMPATIENCE

O, tardy hours! speed swiftlier in thy flight!
Wait not the slow calm journey of the sun,
But pass in clustered legions. Let each one
Spread its three score of dainty wings. The night
Is weary to the eyes that long for light.
O, lagging time! too slow thy course doth run
To him, who waits another day begun;
Haste like the bird outstripping keenest sight.
Why do I pray thee thus to hurry by,
Shrinking still less life's short and slender thread?
Because she waiteth, whose dear lips have said
"Come," and the hour to meet her draweth nigh;
And I, though sinner, like a saint, despise
The weary time 'twixt me and paradise.

SHE KNOWETH NAUGHT

SHE knoweth naught of me by human sign,
Nor I of her, and yet we calmly wait,
Mayhap in vain, the bidding of our fate.
She knoweth naught: for unto her no line,
Nor single word of love from pen of mine,
Goeth to tell her of my lonely state.
Nathless, in spirit we communicate,
And in swift dreams each other's thoughts divine.
So upon unseen parchment I indite
Fond messages to her and she to me.
In sleep she readeth what I fain would write,
And in night visions her sweet thoughts I see.
Thus oft from heart to heart some message slips,
Penned by no fingers, uttered by no lips.

METIS, 1885

HOW many buffets must the bondsman bear,
Till in just anger he return the blow
With a swift stroke that lays the tyrant low ?
How long must he the galling fetters wear,
Till it be well that he arise and dare
To rend and cast them, counting each his foe
Who would subdue within his breast the glow
Of equal manhood that is kindled there ?
How long a people mutely suffer wrong ?
How long be suppliant ere they make demand ?
How long be spurned, till in a surging throng
They gather, stern of purpose, strong of hand,
To throttle the oppressor of the land,
And live immortal in their country's song ?

NOVEMBER

AH me! the days die young and nights grow old,
In this the eleventh hour of the year.
Faded are maple tints. The placid mere
Reflects no more the crimson and the gold
Of the year's sunset. Through the barren wold
The snowflakes wander like the ghosts of leaves.
Nature, indeed, is desolate and grieves
Among the sighing branches that uphold
Naught but blown fragments of some ruined nest;
Then turns a fair face to the bluff caress
Of a new season. O, Forgetfulness!
Methinks thou art a sad world's dearest guest.
So much remembrance is too much regret.
We love, we lose, we weep and we forget.

TOIL

I FIND not pleasure in the bane of toil,
Nor great reward in labour bravely done,—
Smug egotism's flattery;—I, for one,
Sigh not for plough or spade to turn the soil,
And reap rich harvestings of corn and oil,
Beneath the fierce glow of the noonday sun:
Nor hear I music in the ceaseless run
Of busy mills; nor seek I ocean's spoil.

Why should I love that given me as a curse ?
Nay, give me idleness to dream away
The moments that my dreams make happiness:
I hate the cant that fawns with a caress
Upon the fate that rules its little day—
I love not labour even making verse.

DIALECT VERSES

SHAKESPEER AT DEAD-HOSS CRICK

(A romance of the North-West)

IT wuz way out west o' the praree,
Whar the mountains begins to raise,
Pokin' holes in them snowy blankets
Uv clouds that acrost 'em lays.

We wuz washin' down in the gulches,
An' the culler wuz commin' well:
An' the fellers wuz crowdin' from east and west,
Till the place wuz es full es hell.

I've bin in some dandy places,
Whar things wuz a kinder hot:
But I never, in my hul mortal days,
Struck so near to the real old spot.

It aint no use to tell yer
The names uv the boys that wuz thar:
But they wuz the hardest crowd uv pills
That ever wuz straight an' squar.

I mean thar warn't no skulkin,'
An' shootin' behind a plank:
Er plantin' a cold deck up on a pal,
An' standin' in with the bank.

Thar wuz plenty uv cold-decks planted,
An' plenty uv shootin' done:
But the fust wuz all in the way uv biz
An' the other wuz straight es a gun.

Ef thar wuz a row, it wuz up-an'-up,
An' the fust that draw'd cud bark,
An' we gen'ly lifted the other chap,
An' planted him out in the dark.

But I wuz agoin' to tell yer
A thing that occurr'd one night,
Jes' to show yer the kinder chaps them wuz,
In their trew an' proper light.

The biggest strikes wuz by Dead-Hoss Crick,
An' thar, on a summer's day,
We wuz all at work, when we heered the bells
Uv the mule teams up the way.

In another minit they come in sight,
A-joggin' down the road:
An' I reckon it made them boys' eyes stare
To see what they had fer load.

They was sittin' on trunks an' boxes,
An' bumpin' right along—
A gal, four men, an' a woman,
An' the gal wuz singin' a song.

An' lookin' es pleased an' happy
Es if ridin' a Pulman car:
An' when she ketched sight uv the boys' red shirts,
She hollered out "Thar they are."

An' kep' on clappin' her little han's,
An' laffin' jes' like a bird:
I guess them boys jes' thought that laff
The sweetest they'd ever heard.

Fer they all quit work, an' foller'd
Them teams, with their starin' eyes,
Till they turned the corner at Tucker's dam,
An' then, I think, the skies

Grow'd jes' a trifle darker,—
Though the sun wuz a kinder strong,—
An' I noticed that some o' the younger boys
Didn't work, that day, so long.

When I come down from the gulch that night,
I was tired an' wet an' mad:
Fer I hadn't got quite the pile o' dust
That I thought I oughter had.

An' when I come to the "Dead-Hoss House"
(The biggest bar in the town)
The boys wuz standin' in threes an' fours
A-jawin' each other down.

I hadn't heered no shootin',
An' no one wuz givin' chin;
An' they all wuz lookin' so ser'us like,
That I couldn't take it in.

So I jes' turns into the bar an' calls
Fer a finger of whiskey white,
When the slinger sez, es he antied the stuff,
"Er ye goin' to the show to-night?"

An' thar, hung up on the bar-room wall,
An' printed in black an' yeller,
I reads the bill uv the play that night:
It wuz Shakspeer's play "Otheller".

I knowed it es soon es I seen the name,
Fer I'd seen it onct before
Way down in Frisco', in '62,
The year I jined the war:

But the boys know'd nuthin' better
Than the snidest nigger show,
Er a dance hall in behind a bar,
With a faro bank below.

So them wuz the player people
That passed us that very day,
An' I snicker'd to think how the boys would stare
When they seen a fust-class play.

That hall wuz crowded fer standin' room,
An' they scooped the dust, you bet:
An' lots uv the boys give double weight,
Fer that laff wuz a-ringin' yet.

The boys wuz rather startled
When they seen the nigger coon,
What jumped with the Gran' Dook's dater,
But they took to him pooty soon.

But they wuz down on the feller
What scoopt the nigger in,
An' hissed an' hollered so loud at last
Ye could hardly hear him chin.

I seen the boys wuz nervus,
An' a kinder wicked too:
So I edges my way along to see
Jes' what they wuz goin' to do.

The play wuz about nigh over,
Es well es my mem'ry went,
An' the laffin' gal wuz lyin' asleep
In a bed like a little tent.

When in jumps the nigger feller,
A-ravin', full's a goat,
An' chuckin' a bowie-knife on the floor,
He grips her 'roun the throat.

She jes' gave one little holler:
But that wuz mor'n enuff:
Fer I know'd them boys wuz nervus,
An' wouldn't stand no guff.

It wuz ping—ping—ping—es quick es flash,
An' the nigger, he fell back dead:
An' the gål lep' up with a skeert, white face,
An' lifted his lifeless head,

An' called out "Father, father!"
An' kiss'd his eyes an' lips:
But when she seen them stains uv blood
A rednin' her finger tips,

She jes' riz up like a spectre,
Es white an' es cold an' tall,
That a shiver went right through every man
That wuz standin' in that hall.

Her voice wuz low, but every word
Wuz es clear es a bell at night:
"May his red blood drip forever
Before his murderers' sight."

Thar warn't no talk uv lynchin',
For we wuzn't up to fun:
It wuz rough on her, but es for them,
We know'd how the thing wuz done.

That night, es I rolled my blankets out,
I found three bags uv dust:
An' I knowed the boys what put them thar,
An' they know'd I'd keep their trust.

I sometimes wonder ef that thar gal
Can ever sing or laff:
Perhaps she don't an' perhaps she do:
Fer she don't know only half.

She don't know that me an' another chap,
In the early mornin' light,
Went up the road by Tucker's dam,
Where fust she come in sight,

An' found three bodies lyin'
A-restin' peacefully,
Jes' like three miners sleepin',
Under a cedar tree.

She don't know that they luv'd her,
An' I guess she never will:
But them wuz the kinder tuffs that worked
In the gulch by Dead-Hoss Hill.

That's all I know uv Shakspeer,
    An' it's all I want to know:
I've never bin to a play since then,
    An' I never want to go.

They say he's made lots uv heroes:
    Well, gimme my ch'ice an' pick,
An' I'll take the three he made that night
    In the gulch at Dead-Hoss Crick.

THE CRITIC OF THE PILOT MOUND

I AIN'T got nuthin' to talk of,
An' I never wuz much on a speech,
Besides I've given up jawin'
Of things that is out o' my reach.

An' I reckon thar ain't no profit,
That any of us can see,
Repeatin' sumthin' some other chap
Sez slicker ner you er me.

But thar's sometimes a powerful feelin'
A-movin' around within,
A-forcin' a quiet feller like me,
To get on his feet an' chin.

An' if he's got sumthin' to holler,
Sumthin' that's good an' true,
P'raps it'll bear repeatin',
Ef he puts it a way that's new.

I never wuz no great student,
Studyin' ain't in my line,
Ranchin' out on the praree,
Er blastin' down in the mine.

Yet I see a heap o' beauty—
Poetry you would say—
In the things that's passin' around me
Pretty nigh every day.

Yet I never thought of askin'
The question, what natur' meant,
Layin' the praree out on the flat
An' the mountain up like a tent ?

An' I don't think natur' reckoned
Herself, on the reason why,
When she put the green in the forest,
An' the blue up thar in the sky.

D'ye think when I hear the singin'
Of birds in the early spring,
Er watch a hawk in the twilight,
Afloat on its steady wing,

That I want to collar the critters,
An' tear 'em apart to see
Jest what has produced that music,
Er the power to float so free ?

D'ye think 'cos a man's a doctor,
An' knows how each muscle moves,
He kin get a tenderer feelin'
From the hand of the gal he loves ?

Thar's a sayin' that "knowledge is power",
An' I don't say it ain't no such:
But haven't you seen some fellers
That pretty nigh know'd too much—

Filled to bustin' with knowledge,
Latin an' French an' Greek:
Yet couldn't aheerd the talkin'
Of fogs in the cedar creek ?

I didn't come here to be sassy,
An' say that a man's a fool,
Fer knowin' mor 'n I know myself
Of things that ye learn in school.

For school is a powerful blessin'
To boys in the winter spell,
Readin' an' learnin' to cypher,
An'—courtin' the gals as well.

Larnin's a thing I've wished fer
Many an' many a trip,
When I've heerd the fellers talkin'
O' things that wuz past my grip.

Fer I've thought ef I'd the knowledge
They wuz slingin' around so loose
Fer no partic'lar purpose,
I'd put it to better use.

Yet I ain't got any envy
Of fellers that knows a pile,
Fer who knows, a heap o' larnin'
Mebbe would cramp my style.

But here's the idee that strikes me,
When I'm lis'nin' to larned talk,
That it don't get onto the beauties
That's plain es a piece of chalk.

Huntin' around fer sumthin'
That does'nt amount to shucks,
No more ner a weed on a mountain—
Sumthin' they calls a "crux."

Cruxes is puzzles, they tell me,
Then cruxes be damned, sez I,
Give me the wide bright river,
Give me the open sky.

Out in the long swift rapid,
The track may be kinder queer:
But keep yer eye on the river,
An' yer arm'll know how to steer.

But if ye git feelin' nervous
With eyein' one nasty spot,
The chances is ten to nuthin'
That you an' yer load's upsot.

'Cos why? When the stream's arushin'
Like thought from a mighty mind,
Thar ain't no time fer viewin'
The bubbles that's left behind.

They wuz part of old natur's pictur':
But what matter fer you to know
Ef they wuz the risin' of nat'ral gas,
Er the breath of a rat below ?

Jist a word to the students of writers
Who hev writ the swaggerest things:
Don't lose the beauty of flyin' birds,
Dissectin' their cold ded wings.

Look out on them mountain ranges
An' the clouds that acrost 'em float,
What matter is it to you er me,
Ef that speck es a bar er goat ?

Be keerful, a-huntin' fer little parts,
That they don't so fill yer soul,
That it won't hev room when yer finished,
To take in the mighty whole.

"THE INJUN"

(An incident in the Minnesota Massacre of 1862).

YE say the Injuns' all alike,
A bad an' sneakin' lot:
An' ain't no use fer nuthin'
So the cusses should be shot ?

Well, p'raps they is, an' p'raps they ain't,
A lazy, wuthless crowd:
Yet durn my skin ef I kin see
Why white men chin so loud.

Ef some o' them poor devils kicks
'Cause things ain't run quite squar',
An' jumps an Indian agent's ranch,
An' yanks his bloomin' har,

Thar ain't no thought uv causes
An' no one cares a cuss,
It's jes' call out the Blue Coats,
An' give them sumthin' wuss.

Thar's good an' bad in Injun,
    An' thar's good an' bad in White:
But, somehow, they is allus wrong,
    An' we is allus right.

But I'm an old, old timer,
    I've jes' bin here so long,
That I kin mostly allus tell
    The ones that's right an' wrong.

An' ye can bet yer sainted life,
    When things get steamin' hot,
That some white fool or knave has lit
    The fire that biles the pot.

Ye think the Injun isn't squar'?
    That's jes' whar ye mistake:
Fer bein' true to them that's true,
    The Injun scoops the cake.

Fer I kin tell ye what occurr'd
    Way back in 'sixty-two
When things in Minnesota State
    Wuz lookin' kinder blue.

The Sioux wuz up an' on the shoot
    A-slingin' round their lead,
An' scalpin' every mother's son
    That wuzn't bald or dead.

Thar warn't a livin' Yankee—
An' lots wuz brave an' bold—
That would have crossed them plains alone
Fer a waggon load uv gold.

'Cause why ? We know'd the Guv'ment
Wuzn't treatin' Injuns fair:
That's why they riz an' painted things,
An' raised the settlers' hair.

That summer a fur-trader
Came up from Montreal,
An' on his way up to Garry
He landed at Saint Paul.

An' all the guides an' hunters said
He couldn't cross the plains,
Fer them thar painted devils
Wuz layin' low fer trains.

He only laffed, an' said he know'd
The Injuns all his life,
An' he wuz goin' to mosey through
An' take along his wife.

An' she, you bet, wuz plucky,
An' said she'd go along,
Fer Injuns only went fer them
As allus done 'em wrong.

Now I should smile . . . . 'twuz riskey—
An' all the fellers said
The chances of their gettin' through
Warn't wuth an ounce uv lead.

But sure's yer born they started,
Right out the northern trail,
Aboard a praree schooner
With a Texan steer fer sail.

An' right a-top that creekin' cart,
Upon the highest rack,
That trader nailed a bloomin' rag—
An English Union Jack.

So that he'd gone and done it,
Es stubborn es a mule:
An' knowin' fellers said we'd seen
The last of that damn fool.

They wuzn't long upon the trail
Before a band of Reds
Got on their tracks, an' foller'd up,
A-goin' to shave their heads.

But when they seen that little flag
A-stickin' on the cart,
They jes' said, "Hudson Bay. Go on.
"Good trader with good heart."

An' when they struck the river,
An' took to their canoe,
'Twuz that thar bit uv culler
That seen 'em safely through.

Fer thar that cussed little rag
Went floatin' through the State—
A-flappin' in the face uv death,
An' smilin' right at fate.

That wuz the way them 'tarnal fools
Crossed them thar blazin' plains,
An' floated down the windin' Red
Through waves with bloody stains.

What give that flag its virtoo ?
What's thar in red an' blue,
To make a man an' woman dar'
What others dasen't do ?

Jes' this—an' Injuns know'd it—
That whar' them cullers flew,
The men that lived beneath them
Wuz mostly straight an' true.

That when they made a bargain,
'Twuz jes' as strong an' tight
As if't were drawn on sheep-skin
An' signed in black an' white.

That's how them Hudson traders done
    Fer mor'n two hundred year:
That's why that trader feller crossed
    Them plains without a fear.

An' jes' so long es white men
    Don't try some little game
To euchre out the red man,
    So long he will act the same.

But when the men beneath that flag
    Tries any monkey ways,
Then, good-bye, old time friendship,
    Fer the Injun's goin' ter raise.

But jes' believe me, wunst for all,
    To them that treats him fair,
The Injun mostly allus wuz,
    And is, and will be, square.

A CRY FROM THE SASKATCHEWAN

March 1885

MY pale-face brothers, I am no longer young
And hot of blood like the young buffalo
Seeking a foe. The wind, long winters past,
That rocked the cedar and pine that made your cradles,
Drifted the tossing snow flakes in my hair
And cooled the stormy passions in my breast.

More than a thousand moons I've seen take shape,
Like to fair, slender daughters of your race,
That love rounds into perfect symmetry.
Yes! I am old, and soon shall lay me down,
And calmly wait the unseen messengers
Who will clasp my hands and make me young again,
And bear me to wide plains, and forests deep,
That shall for ever bud and blossom untilled.

O brothers, I have ever been your friend
I have not sat within the Shabandoan
In moody silence, when the barking dogs
Told me some stranger to my race appeared.

Nay! I have arisen, and come with open hands
To meet him, and make him welcome to my fire,
And laid the fairest matting for his rest.
And with these hands that knew not how to serve,
Have I prepared the best that stream or plain
Could yield, to prove the friendship that I bore.

Upon these withered hands is there a stain
Of the bright life-blood of your favoured race ?
Ay, one, and only one. It is a tale
So short it scarce can weary.

He came to us,
Lost, frozen, starving, and I said, "O Son,
Whether there be scant or plenty you shall share."
And all the native skill I had to cure
And soothe the ills that do befall my race
I lavished on him: and he lived with us,
And all the arts that you call rude, he learned.
His hand could set the snare, could carve the pipe,
Could bend the bark to the swan-breasted craft,
Could dip its cedar wing in treacherous waves
Of giddy rapids, and bring it safely curving
Up the swift-backing eddy, where he could poise
His spear a moment, like a fatal shaft
From the Great Spirit's quiver: then strike and lift
With one continuous unerring motion,
From the blood-dabbled wave, the river chieftain.
All this, and more, these lips and hands of mine
Taught him, as though he were my flesh and blood.

One child I had, more than the rest I loved,
Her mother's latest love and pain and joy,
Made sacred by the life-blood of that mother,
Splashed on its little face one wild dark night
When my tribe's deadly foe came down on us.
She grew like the red willow swaying in the wind,
As lithe, as strong, as supple. Oh! her lips
Were like the rich frost-darkened berry unplucked:
Her eyes, such as I've seen when suddenly,
In the deep winding of a forest trail,
In early spring I have met a startled doe
Wandering alone—I could not wing a shaft—
The same sweet eyes in wonder, fear and love.

He left us to go eastward to his people,
And come again when our long pointed shoes
Would make swift knifelike slashes on the bosoms
Of glistening snow-drifts: but, when he was gone,
I found her moaning near the river bank,
And gazing in the waters and drawing nigher,
And looking over into a foaming pool
Where once I saw whirl for a moment, and crush,
A bark canoe, and a great chieftain's arms
Thrown upward, and then pass away for ever.

I caught her arm and looked within her eyes,
And they were like her mother's, when first she knew
A son of hers might some day go to battle:
Except that these swam with cloud-shadowed tears,
And those with drops that glistened in the sun.

I said no word: but to her brother's care
I gave her. Then with quiver full, and tomahawk,
And hunting knife keen-edged, alone I went
More swiftly than a wingéd arrow, or flight
Of southern-flying crane: upon his trail.
But he had travelled with a coward heart
That lent swift wings unto his flying feet:

But mine were borne by hurricanes of hate.
And on the second day, as I pressed through
The last thick willow growth of a great swamp,
There stood he, a score of bow lengths from my hand.
His ear had caught the sound of breaking stems,
And turning full about, his swart face grew
Like a last summer's sapless, sun-dried leaf:
While round the haft of a knife that once was mine,
His fingers made a quick convulsive clasp,
That proved him traitor, I was in no mood
To even the odds of fight that favoured me.
I flashed a long, barbed arrow from the sheath,
And running forward, set it in the string,
And drew it, with the strength of Nana, to the head:
But all too madly, for like a withered rush,
The bow snapt, and the barb drew back and tore
A furrow in my hand that spurted blood.
He gave a mocking laugh, for now the odds
Were even, and he was young and broad and strong.
I stopped not: had the arrow sped aright,
I think my blade would have drunk blood as soon.
He made a blow or guard, I know not what,

But I was blown upon him like a pine
Reft from a mountain, and he fell without a cry.
I tore the bleeding trophy from his head,
And turned me back unto my desolate camp.

The sun was going down behind the hills,
As I strode to my wigwam. Entering there
I found her sitting, rocking to and fro
And chanting o'er a charm of beads and shells.
She turned with lips apart like one athirst.
I knew not what I did, for still I raged,
And throwing down the tuft of bloody hair,
Nigh to her, then paced me to the door,
And turning, said, half fiercely: "Minnota! Child!
A lock of lover's hair I bring you back."

She was my race, my blood in very truth!
She made no moan, nor cry, nor any sign
Of her intent: but reaching slowly out,
Picked up the shrivelling skin and gazed at it
For one long moment: then into my eyes:
Then letting slip back from her shining shoulders
That were red golden with a shaft of flame
Shot from the hills, the blanket that was caught
Across her bosom, she with her left hand laid
The lock beneath the swelling of her ripening breast,
And swinging her right arm with a swift flash,
Pinned it there with a bright blade, and fell back.

Can I tell more ? Alas, there is no more.
The sun of my life went down behind those hills,
And left me naught but twilight and dark night.
Oh! I was like a mountainside bereft
Of its fresh verdure by a summer frost.
I planned a terrible revenge for this,
That would have swollen a river high with blood:
But once, a motherless infant of your race
Smiled in my face and turned me from my purpose.

'Tis thus, O my white brothers, I have not
Done one of all your race a single wrong.
How many of your race have injured mine,
And who of mine have made a red return,
I know not;—but that wrongs for ever cry.
But I am old and guided not by passion,
For I striven to learn and know your ways.
I have loved many of you, as my own:
I would my race could at a single bound,
Leap the great ocean of change that you have crossed
After a thousand years of buffetings.

I know of your traditions but an echo,
Yet if it be the truth, it tells me this:
That you have come through gradual years of change
To commune now with strange mysterious powers,
From the high pinnacle where I see you stand.
Like a long journey from the Eastern plain
For ever rising higher to the West,
You walk where mountains lift their snowy heads

And see forever the golden sides of clouds.
I would that we could stand beside you there:
But the way is long and weary to our feet:
And we must rest upon a thousand slopes,
Before we touch the mountains where you dwell.

O, my white brother, you have wronged us much—
Mayhap unwittingly, yet are we wronged.
Doth not the glancing arrow from the bow
Of thine own kin, bury its fatal fang
As deep as though it bore a foeman's hate ?

But there are those who hate—I know not why—
Whose lives seem nothing but a poisonous scorn
Of all things time and custom make revered:
Others, who say they truly pity us,
But that we idly stand upon the way
Of their Great Spirit, Progress, a new God,
Who like the shrieking, fire-breathing demon,
That drags your luxury across the earth,
Mangles the child that wondering stands to gaze.

Far back before my earliest memory,
Before my father's, came people of your race,
With twofold object. Some there came to trade
And give in barter for fur-coated skins,
Clothing and food, and swift death-breathing weapons,
And deftly fashioned snares, whereby we brought
Great store of wealth and happiness to them:
Who gave us value as they counted worth.

And there came others garmented in black,
Who sought no recompense for what they gave.
They told us of a new God, and his Son
Who died that we might live forever anew
In some fair after-life.
And those who bought
Our beaver-skins were also of this faith,
And we believed them and were satisfied.
And there came many who joined their lives with ours,
Who brought from you some learning of your race,
Who caught from us the love of boundless freedom,
And these two races side by side, perchance,
Were walking slowly towards your higher life.

Yet, I can see not that the new belief
Is better or purer than the one we held.
We worshipped one great everlasting Spirit,
Who, like a chief, ruled lands beyond the grave.
We strove to quell within the throbbing breast
All trembling fear, and fit ourselves to join
In the heart-lifting dangers that rejoice
Our fathers in the happy hunting grounds.

We taught a stern creed, giving blood for blood.
Blood for a broken word: it was the one,
The only final penalty for wrong.
The culprit was not hedged or fenced about
With laws so nicely intertwined and set,
That each might counteract the other's worth,
Nor any new law made we, seeming strong,

Tagged like a new line to a rotten one,
Which latter, breaking at the ravelled flaw,
Gave freedom to the captive struggling fish:
Our laws were simple with full swift effect.

And now I think you weary of and chafe
Against the doctrines that you taught us first,
The doctrines of your mild, peace-loving Christ,
Who wore upon his brow a crown of thorns.
And you have made yourselves another Christ,
This Progress, crowned with iron, and fire and gold:
And all who will not turn and follow him,
Must fall beneath his iron feet, and die.

There came a time when many of your race
Builded their wigwams on the eastern rim
Of our great prairie stretching like a world:
Builded upon the bank of a broad stream,
And among those were some who joined with us
As others had: and so we lived in peace.
Then came a day, when we were told that these,
Our own true brothers bound to us by blood,
Had risen in wrath, and broken some new fetter
That you had made to bind them to one spot;
But you had ever spoken kind words to us,
And so we lifted not a hand to strike.
And you picked up the broken fetter that fell,
And welded it for those who fled not west.
But your new Christ followed, followed, followed.

And then, at last, you came unto our doors,
Gorgeous in dress of crimson, blue and gold,
And held out to us, on sharp points of steel,
A bond by which we madly gave to you
Our fair illimitable hunting ground:
And got scant meal, that leaves the belly starved,
And a small plot where we may make our graves.

I know but little of your past traditions:
But I have heard, that for a thousand years
Your people have been skilled in making bonds
And keeping them—if profit lay therein.
O, my white brothers, glad am I this arm
Is weak, and that my blood is slow and cold:
For I have smoked with you the pipe of peace,
And I have held your hands within my own,
And called you my white brother and my friend:
So will I die and violate it not.
But my eyes are opened, and though very dim,
See both together, the future and the past.

Why did you come not to us first and say,
"My brothers, in our land beyond the waves
Our wives and children gasp for the pure air
In crowded wigwams: and the chiefs who rule,
Would bind a starving beggar if he dared
To fill his cavernous belly with the food
That his own hand had slain upon the hills."
Why came you not thus, saying openly:
"Give us some portion of your boundless plains,

Your forests, lakes and streams: and we will come
And build a nation by your side, and teach
Your children what they care to learn of us:
And draw the limit line that shall divide
Our people from your people, our land from yours—
Only to mark the ownership—for our hands
Will stretch across to yours, our grateful hearts
Be ever with you in your wandering camps."
Would we have turned you from us ? I trow not.
Have we not given you all, for leave to die?

I know not of myself: but of my race
One, who deep learned the symbols of your tongue,
Told me, that in those wondrous knowledge leaves
That bud and bloom and wither every sun
Among your people, there are ungrateful words
Calling us a useless and a dying race,
That soon must pass and leave the land to you.

Yes! O my brothers, we are a dying race.
Dying of the very poison that you brought
And bartered with us for our native wealth.
Then turned you homeward to warm luxury,
Leaving us stretched upon the frozen plain—
Dying of the diseases, O my brothers!
That you have brought into our stainless blood.

Hark! O my brothers, I hear a cry, a shriek,
And there are crimson stains upon the snow.
There will be pools of blood in the spring grass.

See, the half-brothers of my blood once more
Have broken their fetters, and set the arrow straight,
And drawn it to the head—I hear it sing—
Stand back! or many of your race shall weep.

I have no part in this, I am too old:
But I have many sons, and their sons' sons.
I know not whether they will cast themselves
Upon the glittering edge of strife, and die,
Like their forefathers in the golden past:
Or whether they will fold their hands and sicken,
And drop like rotting branches, one by one.
I see the cloud that blackens in the East,
I hear the murmur of the coming storm
Of blinding hail borne on a pitiless wind.
But, O my brothers, the storm winds of these plains
Blow not one way alone, but turn and whirl,
Sweeping from east to west, then back again,
And smiting every face with their wild hands.
And this storm raging westward shall return
And jagged lightning strike all sides alike.

Oh! the Ocean will thirst for the cool, fresh rivers,
For the streams will be salt with the tears of women.

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